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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN
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DE RUEHAH #0239 0491303
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P 181303Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2333
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4848
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2621
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2486
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3092
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3336
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000239

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: PUBLIC BUSES IN MARY AWAIT PRESIDENTIAL
BLESSING

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public internet.

12. (U) SUMMARY: Two hundred brand-new Russian buses sit parked in a Ministry of Transportation parking lot in Mary Province awaiting President Berdimuhamedov's official "inauguration" before they can be put into service. The President has not yet scheduled his next visit to the province. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance's provincial branch in Mary is already charging the Ministry of Transport for the revenues that the buses should have been collecting. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) Last August, the Ministry of Transportation signed a contract for the purchase of one thousand Russian PAZ buses, spare parts and lubricants. President Berdimuhamedov, aiming to "improve passenger transportation in rural areas and enhance the quality of service offered to citizens," personally signed a decree authorizing the purchase. The buses, a two-door version of the PAZ-32053 series widely used on city and municipal roads in Russia, are produced by the Pavlovsk Bus Plant.

14. (SBU) The buses were evenly distributed among the five provinces of Turkmenistan five months ago. Local authorities in Mary immediately hired additional personnel, including drivers and mechanics, all of whom have yet to start working. A senior Ministry of Finance specialist in Mary told one of our local staff that on January 1 the Ministry of Finance began charging the Ministry of Transportation for the revenues that the buses were supposed to be collecting. As a result, the Ministry of Transportation's budget for Mary is operating at a deficit, as they are being taxed for buses that are not even in operation.

15. (U) The Ministry of Health in Mary is reportedly in a similar situation after purchasing 50 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter ambulances in July of 2007 from the Spanish firm IPC Motors. The ambulances, delivered in October 2007, reportedly cost 46,500 euros each. A farmer from Murgap District in Mary Province, a relative of our LES, said that his son had been hired to drive one of the new ambulances, but has not been called to work yet. He was told that the local hospital must await the President's arrival and "blessing" before the ambulances are put into service.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: It is true that in Turkmenistan the President traditionally attends ribbon-cutting ceremonies for major national construction projects, and personally ratifies international contracts and treaties. In the case of these buses and ambulances, however, it is unclear whether local officials are actually required to await presidential "inauguration," or whether they are just afraid to proceed without it. END COMMENT.

MILES